

## Athletics Affecting GPA

Joshua Nieves-Hurley

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

## Problem

Many student athletes decide to continue their sport when they go to college. Could it be that many of these athletes' GPAs are affected by the extra stress and lack of time associated with being a student athlete? If so, are these affects generally positive or negative?

(1) In this paper, we will look at findings and data to try and draw some conclusions about student athletes and their GPAs.

## Background

Being a college student can be tough and, at many times, overwhelming. Student athletes have to deal with the many struggles of college life as well as having to manage time to commit to their sport. The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) has academic requirements so that student athletes prioritize being a student first. There is much evidence on both sides of the argument of positive and negative effects of student involvement of athletics. From my experience being a student athlete, I have encountered effects from both sides. Seeing as though there are many other student athletes out there, I wanted to see how others felt and what other researchers have found. (2)

All college students deal with a number of variables that can affect their GPA. The article, *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, states that "Beyond these traditional variables, there are athletic variables unique to student-athletes" (Johnson, Wessel, and Pierce, 2010, p. 236). This article describes how the effect on the athletes grades can depend on other variables specific to just student athletes. These "nontraditional" variables can include things such as

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which sport the athlete plays, how much oversight the coach gives the athlete, the athlete's playing time, and the winning percentage of the team/athlete. This article also showed something else in their findings that I found to be very interesting. The researchers have found that typically female student athletes had higher first year GPAs (Johnson, Wessel, and Pierce, 2010, p. 242). They predict that the reason for this could include the following: female student athletes have lower levels of athletic identity, females are more connected to responsibility and care, or females have a greater investment in social capital (Johnson, Wessel, and Pierce, 2010, p. 243). (2)

Another article I read on the data base told of the NCAA raising its academic requirements. For college student athletes, it is a requirement that an athlete must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA in order to remain academically eligible. Starting in 2016, the expectations for Division 1 athletes will be raised to a minimum of 2.3 GPA (The Salt Lake Tribune, 2014). If the original 2.0 GPA requirement wasn't cutting it, the new 2.3 GPA requirement will definitely force student athletes to stay on top of their work. (2)

One last article that I viewed argued that co-curricular activities, including sports, can positively affect a student's academic performance. It says, "A research conducted by the education department of the United States of America discovered that the students who actively contribute in the co-curricular activities are more likely to have a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or more as compared to those who are not involved in co-curricular activities (Stephens & Schaben, 2002)" (Daniyal, Nawaz, Hassan, and Mubeen, 2012, p. 258). Arguing that

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spending too much time in leisure activities can create poor working habits, the article also says that spending time in formal activities (sports, clubs, etc.) can do quite the opposite. (2)

## **Method**

In order to solve the posing question about athletes and their GPAs, I conducted some interviews on some of the student athletes that live in my dorm hall. I did this with the hopes of attaining an opinion from those who actually live this lifestyle. I also researched other people's findings from articles from the Andrus Library database to see what other researchers concluded in their similar studies.

## **Findings**

While interviewing some of my fellow student athletes, I found very mixed results. Some of the student athletes admitted that their school work was taking a toll, while others said they were able to stay on top of their academics. One person that I interviewed even said, "I feel like sports keep me on top of my game. In order to be successful at both, you need to make sure you time manage like crazy. I think sports help me to do this and keep my priorities straight" (Payson, 2015). This could suggest that there can very well be positive effects as well as negative to your academics when it comes to being a student athlete. (2)

## **Conclusion**

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Judging by my research, I have concluded that student involvement in athletics can have both positive and negative effects on academics. Some of the articles I found, such as the one from *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, showed evidence for creating good habits that might lead to better academic performance. Others suggested that the extra responsibilities might hinder academic performance. The data from my interviews showed backed up claims from both of these arguments, showing that some students struggled to manage their time while others did not. (3)

During my own personal experience as a student athlete, I have found that time management can be tough. I have also found myself prioritizing sports over academics. On the other hand, I have found that being a student athlete forces me to do my work and not slack off in order to stay academically eligible. I think overall being a student athlete forces you to keep your grades up, but can also get tough and stressful. It really depends on the student/athlete themselves to decide whether they want to let their responsibilities as a student athlete to create either positive or negative effects to their GPA. (3)

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## References

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